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Meeting notes from:

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**The Seventeenth Meeting of the  
Detroit River International Crossing  
*Community Consultation Group***

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Meeting Date/Location:

July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
Mackenzie Hall — Sandwich/Windsor, Ontario

Facilitator: Glenn Pothier, President, GLPi

## **Meeting Purpose**

This seventeenth meeting of the Community Consultation Group (CCG) was focused on providing information about and discussing the technically and environmentally preferred crossing/plaza location. In addition, the meeting was used to:

- Provide an overview of highlights/feedback from the June 18-19 Public Information Open Houses and subsequent June 24-25 follow-up workshops.
- Update members on the status of various project components and U.S. study progress.
- Provide an overview of next steps in the project, including the meetings schedule and upcoming context sensitive solutions workshops.
- Allow for public/CCG member comments and questions about issues of their choosing.

## **Summary of Meeting Highlights**

### ***Opening Remarks***

- Glenn Pothier, the independent meeting facilitator, called the group to order, welcomed all participants and observers, introduced project team members, and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

### ***Review of the May 21/08 CCG Meeting Summary***

- Glenn Pothier noted that the summary of the May 21/08 CCG meeting had been previously distributed to all CCG members. He then asked for feedback regarding any substantive errors or omissions. One participant noted that additional context is required regarding the comment captured at the bottom of page eight of the May 21<sup>st</sup> summary which reads: *“It’s archaic to make MTO the sole government agency responsible for the DRIC decision and determining the location of the access route and size of the tunnels. These decisions should be made by a combination of government departments and ministries, and in cooperation with such bodies as the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Health, Environment Canada and Health Canada. The benefits of a tunnel should be considered for health and environmental reasons. We’re doing more for trucks than for people.”* This participant — who had made the comment in question at the previous meeting — wished to emphasize that a variety of government ministries and departments should have been involved/consulted earlier in the DRIC process, and that doing so could have resulted in an enhanced mandate/scope for the project and/or changes to the manner in which the study was conducted. It was agreed that the previous minutes would be left as is, but that this additional comment would be reflected in this summary (as so done above).

## ***Public Comment***

- Glenn Pothier reminded the group that in the interest of openness, transparency and accountability, any member of the public can attend a CCG meeting as an observer. He then asked if any comments/questions were forthcoming from observers at this time. None were raised.

## ***Review of Technically and Environmentally Preferred Crossing and Plaza Location***

- Len Kozachuk (Deputy Project Manager, URS Canada) began by referencing the June 18<sup>th</sup> DRIC Partnership announcement of the technically and environmentally preferred crossing and plaza alternative. He then reviewed the location and some of the particulars for both the preferred plaza (B1) and crossing (B). He provided a rationale for these choices, while also presenting the analysis highlights for those alternatives not being carried forward (given that they do not provide the best balance of advantages and disadvantages).
- Following Mr. Kozachuk's remarks as described above, CCG members offered a number of comments and questions:

*Question:* The length of the span for Crossing A is the longest — if Crossing A was chosen as a cable-stayed bridge, would it be one of the longest in the world?

*Response:* First, to be clear, the Project Team is recommending a bridge at crossing B, not crossing A. If a cable-stayed bridge were built at crossing A, it would likely be among the longest in the world. However, it is not practical at this time to build a cable-stayed bridge of the length required for crossing A.

*Comment:* I understand that a suspension bridge is typically more stable and proven.

*Response:* When properly designed, both cable stay and suspension bridges are stable. Both have proven themselves in use at various locations around the world.

*Question/Comment:* Is it possible for an arch bridge to still be considered? I believe there are some in other parts of the world that are as long as the one required for the Windsor-Detroit crossing. The team should consider this.

*Response:* The span needed for the new crossing is too long for an arch bridge. This option is not considered a viable alternative.

*Question:* Will tolls be collected at the plaza on the Canadian side and is there room to accommodate this?

*Response:* Tolls could be collected on the Canadian side — the plaza layout makes provision for this.

*Question:* Will there be strobe lights on the towers of the bridge?

*Response:* There will likely be navigational lighting along with appropriate roadway lighting on the bridge. Furthermore, the cable-stayed bridge support towers (the tallest of the alternatives) are about five metres below, and therefore not in conflict with, pertinent airspace clearance requirements.

*Question:* Can you please provide additional details about the plaza layout and function?

*Response:* [Note: Len Kozachuk referenced a slide while providing the following descriptive overview.]

- The overall shape of the plaza is dictated by the various functions it must perform and the services it must contain — there is an emphasis on the smooth, safe and orderly flow of traffic.
- Allowances have been made for inbound inspection to occur on the plaza site.
- There will be a central administration and staff building as well as designated primary inspection areas for trucks and automobiles (including 19 truck inspection booths and 10 automobile inspection booths) on the plaza.
- There will also be designated secondary inspection areas for trucks and automobiles, a VACIS area for truck x-rays, some maintenance facilities and the Canada Food Inspection Agency facility.
- Land has been set aside for storm-water runoff.
- There are provisions to have a duty free shop located on the plaza.
- Broadway will be kept open and Sandwich Street will be maintained.

*Question:* How many acres are available for primary and secondary inspections?

*Response:* There are a total of 132 acres and 232 parking spaces for commercial and secondary inspections.

*Question:* The plan calls for 29 lanes — is that sufficient, is there room for expansion?

*Response:* The plan has considered anticipated traffic conditions to the year 2035. The number of lanes should be adequate to that time and likely sometime beyond. It's premature to be discussing expansion.

*Comment/Question:* Based on the current plaza design, there does not appear to be provision for future plaza expansions. You modeled for traffic to 2035 and according to DRIC projections that includes 70% of traffic from the Ambassador Bridge, the tunnel, and the Blue Water Bridge in Sarnia. Can you handle that volume of diverted traffic?

*Response:* The actual number for diverted traffic is closer to 60% and that is considered quite high. The plaza is designed to handle that amount of diverted traffic. Remember, the plaza will not be constructed to full build-out for several years in the future.

*Question/Comment:* Are 232 parking spaces sufficient for future growth? I think the number is insufficient — you should be considering the Nemark land for future growth and expansion.

*Response:* Yes, the number of parking spaces has been determined to be more than adequate. However, in the future, the Nemark plant could be considered as a land parcel for expansion.

*Question/Comment:* When will a meeting on Governance occur? Local residents who will be living with the plaza in their neighbourhood need to know what is happening on this front.

*Response:* We understand the community interest in governance issues. No date for such a meeting has been set. We will let the Group know when a date has been identified.

*Question:* Is there any danger associated with the proposed plaza and its operations being located so close to the existing power plant?

*Response:* None that have been identified to date. The DRIC study team has had several conversations with power plant personnel and will continue to work with them on any as yet to be identified issues as the study progresses.

*Question:* Which type of inspection will occur before you cross the border — the inbound or outbound inspection?

*Response:* Outbound inspection will occur before you cross the border (during periods deemed necessary by the border agency).

*Question:* Will the VACIS system be available for those waiting to go outbound?

*Response:* Yes, there will be provision to access the VACIS system outbound. The plaza designer (Stantec) has been working with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) on these issues.

*Comment:* I like the idea of outbound inspections — this approach seems to make a lot of sense.

*Response:* [Comment noted.]

*Question:* When is VACIS initiated — is it before you enter Canada or once you are in the country?

*Response:* For trucks entering Canada, as they cross the bridge they are directed to VACIS. The U.S. will have VACIS for both inbound and outbound traffic — space has been allocated for this.

*Question:* What is the grade in percent for the new crossing over Ojibway and down to the plaza?

*Response:* The grade to the bridge is at a maximum of 5%, which is less than that to the Ambassador Bridge. The grade at Ojibway is 3%.

*Comment:* There is a lot of concern about noise from trucks braking. The study team needs to take into consideration how jake-braking can be controlled. The rules need to be enforced and those who break them need to be fined.

*Response:* [Comment noted.]

*Question:* How many booths are there for inbound customs on the Ambassador Bridge?

*Response:* There are 20 booths on the Ambassador Bridge.

*Question:* Does the Ambassador Bridge have enough capacity to handle expected traffic to the year 2035, if the new crossing is not built?

*Response:* No. Moreover, it's not simply an issue of vehicle flow capacity. It's also an issue of providing proper required inspection space, improving customs operations, providing redundancy in the network, and taking trucks off local roads.

*Comment:* If the Ambassador Bridge holds up traffic there will still be queues on Huron Church Road.

*Response:* There will be some traffic on both Huron Church Road and Highway 401 to the new plaza location. The Windsor-Essex Parkway will give motorists a new option.

*Question:* After the new crossing is in place, will there still be much traffic on Huron Church?

*Response:* Again, there will be some, but it is expected to be significantly less than it would have been without a new crossing. The new bridge will provide drivers with a choice.

*Comment:* If you're going to bring more traffic into Windsor by diverting or attracting some of those that use the Blue Water Bridge, you need to ensure that the number of booths at the Ambassador Bridge is sufficient. Not everyone will use the new crossing.

*Response:* [Comment noted.]

*Question:* What if the toll is cheaper at the Ambassador Bridge than the new crossing?

*Response:* The vehicle operator will have the option to cross at the less expensive tolled bridge. The driver will choose the route based on traffic conditions, available time and other factors.

*Comment:* This process started years ago. The new crossing is going to bring more trucks into Windsor by diverting them from other crossing locations. There may be more traffic on Huron Church Road after the Windsor-Essex Parkway is completed.

*Response:* That is neither the goal nor the expectation. The purpose of the study is to improve the movement of people and goods across the border. We also want to help reduce congestion on Huron Church Road. Other goals include increasing capacity in the transportation system, providing choice and having some built-in network redundancy.

*Question:* Will hazardous goods be allowed on the new crossing?

*Response:* Hazardous goods are currently allowed on Highway 401 and other 400 series highways. These goods will be permitted on the new bridge subject to the requirements of legislation in both countries.

*Comment:* Compared to the Ambassador Bridge, truck traffic will prefer the new crossing given the better access to I75 South.

*Response:* [Comment noted.]

*Question:* Have traffic projections for the new crossing been developed based on existing traffic at the Ambassador Bridge?

*Response:* Generated traffic volumes are based on forecasts for economic activity. The economic activity is converted into traffic volumes. The projected distribution and impact of that traffic is examined for each road.

### ***Feedback from Public Information Open Houses and Update on U.S. DRIC Study Progress***

- Irene Hauzar (Senior Environmental Planner, URS Canada) noted that the most recent Public Information Open Houses (PIOHs) were held on June 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, and that more than 1,000 people attended over the two-day period. She also noted that many participants shared verbal comments and that about 200 written comments were received — and that the Project Team would be responding to these accordingly. Ms. Hauzar also walked the group through a slide documenting the topic areas reflecting the most frequent comments and questions.
- Mohammed Alghurabi (Michigan Department of Transportation) then provided an update on the companion U.S. Study progress. More specifically, he noted that:
  - Comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be available on the project website, under U.S documents.
  - Comments will be sorted, responded to and included in the final EIS by late fall.
  - The U.S. Team is working with the community on mitigation and enhancement strategies, as well as working with other state and federal agencies — there has been good and frank dialogue about what is possible within the context of the project and what is outside of the study scope.
  - There will be further public meetings.
  - The Record of Decision (ROD) is expected in late 2008/early 2009.
- Following Ms. Hauzar's and Mr. Alghurabi's remarks as described above, CCG members offered a number of comments and questions:

*Comment/Question:* There were a lot of comments at the PIOHs about the Windsor-Essex Parkway and how it compares to the GreenLink proposal — is the Team still considering integrating more GreenLink elements into the Windsor-Essex Parkway design?

*Response:* The Study Team is very interested in comments on the Parkway alternative and, by extension, the GreenLink. The Team is holding to Parkway principles such as keeping tunnels less than 240 metres in length. However, we are working with the public's comments and there are still opportunities for further refinements, some of which could relate to the GreenLink proposal.

*Question:* What are the DRIC study timelines — when do you expect to wrap-up?



*Response:* The EA study should be completed by the end of 2008, with approvals expected by the middle to end of 2009.

*Comment/Question:* I thought that teams on both sides of the river were acting together. Why would Canada announce its preferred plaza/crossing location before the U.S. EIS is complete? What would happen if the U.S. had a different preferred alternative?

*Response:* While the Canadian and U.S. processes are quite similar, there are also some key differences between them — and these need to be respected for legal and other reasons. In the U.S., the draft EIS was posted in February and included all background data examined by the study team. No decisions were made at the time of this document's release — and comment was invited on it. In Canada, all data and the preferred alternative are brought before the public. The preferred alternative as presented in the Canadian PIOHs is consistent with the study results from the U.S. The next phase of the U.S. process is to present the preferred alternative within the final EIS.

*Question:* What happens if the U.S. is told they can't build their plaza?

*Response:* Both the U.S. and Canadian study teams are looking for approvals for the preferred alternatives they have determined should be brought forward. In the event that approvals are not forthcoming, we'll cross that bridge if and when we come to it.

*Question:* Why did the two teams not make a joint announcement?

*Response:* The Canadian and U.S. teams did not make a joint announcement due to timing and process issues as discussed. The Canadian and U.S. DRIC teams are completely in sync with their decision-making and overall schedules.

*Question:* In the U.S. context, what does a Record of Decision mean?

*Response:* The Record of Decision or ROD is submitted after the final EIS is approved. In essence, this is when the new crossing moves from a study to being an actual project on which work can further proceed with a view to eventually starting the construction phase.

*Question:* For how much longer can people living on Talbot Road remain in their homes?

*Response:* Last August, when it became apparent that the Ministry's solution was on Highway 3/Talbot Road, the property acquisition process was initiated on a willing seller-buyer basis. Several homeowners decided

to sell their homes to the Ministry over the past 10 months. No expropriations — should they be required — can be undertaken until the project has formal EA approval. We expect that most people affected by the project will have moved by some time in 2009, but the expropriation process could lengthen this estimate. Construction would not start everywhere at once, so it's possible that some people may remain in their homes longer than others.

*Comment:* The U.S. process includes a 'no build' option. There are some people who are advocating this.

*Response:* The no build option is part of the environmental assessment process in the U.S. It is an alternative that is studied along with the others that are considered.

*Question:* How far is Delray from the plaza? How many people are affected?

*Response:* The U.S. DRIC plaza is 150-160 acres in size and located on the western side of Delray. There are approximately 300-400 dwellings — including about 100 apartment units — in the affected area. Many of those in the area have worked with the U.S. Team and there has been a high degree of cooperation. A survey was conducted with Delray residents and about 50% said they would like to stay in the area, and there are initiatives being considered that would allow them to do so.

*Question:* After you submit the final EIS, isn't there something called a FONSI [Finding of No Significant Impact]?

*Response:* This is a step beyond the EIS — it is a certificate that confirms a finding of no significant impact that allows a proponent to proceed with the project.

### ***Next Steps***

- Len Kozachuk provided a brief overview of next steps. In so doing, he noted that:
  - Additional analysis on certain engineering and environmental items will be completed for the technically and environmentally preferred access route option and plaza/crossing.
  - The team will continue with its comprehensive consultation program and there will be some Context Sensitive Solutions workshops on July 23<sup>rd</sup> (focused on the plaza and crossing) and July 24<sup>th</sup> (focused on the Windsor-Essex Parkway). These workshops will focus on how best to fit these new transportation facilities into the community and will include an exploration of potential designs/treatments, buffering, landscaping, and so forth.

- The next round of PIOHs is anticipated for the Fall of 2008 — these will likely be used to present to the public the preferred alternatives that will be submitted for formal EA approval (including mitigation approaches).
  - The formal documentation for the Canadian portion of the environmental assessment (both federal and provincial) should be completed by the end of this year.
- Following Mr. Kozachuk’s overview, CCG members offered a number of comments and questions:

*Question:* Is the DRIC study team trying for the ‘wow factor’ that the Parks Department is looking for from the GreenLink proposal?

*Response:* Everything will be considered.

*Question:* Is there still communication between the DRIC Team and the City?

*Response:* Yes, there is.

*Comment:* Thank you for separating the workshops into two nights — one for the access road, the other for the plaza/crossing. This is a good idea.

*Response:* You are welcome.

*Comment:* The location for the workshops — St. Clair College — has only paid parking. It costs about four dollars per night and that’s a problem. It’s unfair and I object to it. Please look into paying for participants’ parking.

*Response:* We will look into paying for it. [Note: The DRIC team did subsequently reach an agreement with St. Clair College to ensure that parking was free for all workshop participants.]

*Question:* At the plaza and crossing workshop, will we be able to discuss how the on-ramp and off-ramp from the plaza could direct people into a welcome center in Sandwich?

*Response:* Yes, we can discuss this at the workshop. It could be part of a larger discussion about gateway treatments.

*Question/Comment:* When will you talk about where traffic will go when construction begins at the plaza and crossing? The construction staging and traffic management need to be done well. Sandwichtown is a no truck zone and you need to consider traffic policies — please work with City staff, police, and the residents of Windsor.

*Response:* We have ideas for reasonable approaches and there will be conceptual information provided, but we do not have a specific date for this. Public consultation will continue beyond the completion of the EA report.

- Glenn Pothier noted that there is currently no specific date planned for the next CCG meeting, but that it is likely to take place in the Fall before the next round of PIOHs. As per usual practice, a notice will be sent to CCG members when a date has been set.

### ***Open Forum/Public Comment***

- Glenn Pothier asked whether the Study Team had any further business to add to the meeting agenda. No issues were raised.
- Glenn Pothier then asked whether CCG members had any further business to add to the meeting agenda. No issues were raised.
- Glenn Pothier then made the ‘second round’ call for any comments/questions from meeting observers. None were forthcoming.

### ***Closing Remarks***

- Glenn Pothier thanked the group for their attendance and participation.
- The meeting was formally adjourned (having run from approximately 6:35 to 8:05 p.m.).

**Attendance (names listed in no particular order):**

***CCG Members and Public Observers:***

R. Benson  
Pierre Quenneville  
Louann Sharp  
Lucy Malizia  
Alice DiCaro  
Ed Arditti  
Terry Kennedy  
Mary Ann Cuderman

***Partnership:***

Dave Wake, Roger Ward, Joel Foster, Mike Harrison — Ontario Ministry of Transportation  
Kaarina Stiff — Transport Canada  
Mohammed Alghurabi, Kari Johnson — Michigan Department of Transportation

***Consultant Team:***

Len Kozachuk, Irene Hauzar, Geoff Coy — URS Canada  
Gwen Brice, Sandy Willis — SENES.